

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS  
FISHERIES DIVISION**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF A FUTURE FISHERIES PROJECT ON CAMP CREEK, A  
TRIBUTARY OF THE EAST FORK BITTERROOT RIVER.**

General Purpose: The 1995 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-272 and 273, MCA which directs the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to provide funding for the restoration of essential habitats for the growth and propagation of wild fish populations in lakes, rivers and streams. The legislation established a one-time funding account to ensure that this function would be accomplished. The proposed project is intended to restore the naturally functioning stream channel and riparian areas of a reach of Camp Creek that is a tributary of the East Fork Bitterroot River.

Background: The Bitterroot Chapter of Trout Unlimited applied for funding for a Future Fisheries Project. The application was for funding to be matched with funds from the Montana Department of Transportation and three landowners on Camp Creek. The proposed project is intended to relocate approximately 1-1/2 miles of Camp Creek from a borrow pit along U.S. 93 into a stable streamchannel that would be reconstructed a few hundred feet to the east on private land. Presently, this reach of Camp Creek is a straight channel adjacent to the highway. It does provide some habitat for fish, however, it is degraded from channelization for highway construction many years ago. Due to the location, it is also unsafe and undesirable for anglers to fish.

The primary benefit of this proposed project would be improved habitat for westslope cutthroat and brook trout that inhabit this reach of stream. The project would also allow improved access for anglers and remove potential hazard along US93.

**I. Location of Project**

The proposed project is located on Camp Creek within Township 1 North, Range 19 West, Sections 22, 27 and 34 of Ravalli County. Camp Creek arises in the Bitterroot Mountains near Lost Trail Pass and flows north for approximately 12 miles before entering the East Fork Bitterroot River near Sula, Montana. Specifically, the project is proposed for approximately 1-1/2 miles of stream on private land immediately south of the Bitterroot National Forest, Sula District, ranger station.

**II. Need for the Project**

The 1-1/2 miles of Camp Creek channelized in the borrow pit of U.S. 93 is in degraded condition. The riparian cover is in good condition, however, the streamchannel is out of equilibrium and not in a stable channel type. The habitat for

fish is below the quality that it would be in the proper channel type. Due to the location, immediately adjacent to the highway, angler use is very light. Building a new streamchannel on private lands to the east will add considerable length to the stream and would improve habitat for westslope cutthroat and brook trout. The new location is far more desirable for angling.

### III. Scope of the Project

The proposed project includes both reconstruction of historic and construction of new streamchannel a few hundred feet east of the present Camp Creek. The new streamchannel will be excavated where necessary into a meandering C4 streamtype. Stream gradient will be maintained using rock wiers and streambank stabilization will occur using imported rootwads, large rock and riparian shrubbery. Some of the riparian shrubbery will come from the existing streamchannel next to US93. The methods and design are contained in a publication (Design for the Construction of a New Channel for Camp Creek near Sula, MT, by Gary Decker of West Water Associates, Inc.). Volunteers will make additional riparian plantings where appropriate.

Actual construction of the new channel will take place in dry conditions. When the new channel has been constructed, Camp Creek will be diverted from the channelized section. The channelized section will eventually be filled in and maintained as a shallow wetland. Domestic livestock will be fenced away from Camp Creek along the newly constructed streamchannel except in limited crossing and watering areas.

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#### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Title Camp Creek Relocation

Division/Bureau Fisheries

Description of Project DFWP proposes to partially fund a project to relocate Camp Creek, a tributary of the East Fork Bitterroot River in Ravalli County. A new streamchannel will be built and Camp Creek will be diverted out of the present channel, which is the borrow pit along U.S. 93. The new

channel will be a few hundred feet to the east and will be approximately 1-3/4 miles long. The new channel will provide better fish habitat and access for anglers.

# POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats		x				x
2. Water quality, quantity & distribution			x			x
3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture			x			x
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality			x			x
5. Aesthetics			x			x
6. Air quality				x		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources			x			x
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				x		
9. Historical & archaeological sites					x	x

# POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Social structures & mores				x		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				x		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue			x			x
4. Agricultural or industrial production			x			x
5. Human health				x		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income						
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities			x			x
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				x		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				x		
10. Demands for government services				x		
11. Industrial & commercial activity				x		
12. Demands for energy				x		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				x		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows			x			x

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction Bitterroot Conservation District, Bitterroot Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Montana Dept. of Transportation, U.S. Forest Service

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required  
 EA prepared by : Chris Clancy  
 Date: 4/17/97

#### IV. Explanation of Impacts to Physical Environment

##### **1. Terrestrial and Aquatic Life Habitats**

Currently, Camp Creek is not functioning as a healthy hydrological system. The channelized stream has downcut along the highway. Moving it to the east into a properly designed stream channel will restore it to a condition that is more natural. It will add length to the stream and put it in a location that is further from the highway. This should protect riparian dependent species from encounters with automobiles.

##### **2. Water Quality, Quantity**

Water quality should not change significantly other than short term increases in sediment when Camp Creek is diverted into the new channel. The stream construction will take place under dry conditions, and once it is completed, Camp Creek will be diverted into the new channel. Headgates and diversion structures will be built in the new channel to replace the diversion facilities in place now.

##### **3. Geology and Soil Quality, Stability and Moisture**

Topsoil removed from the excavated channel will not be wasted. It will most likely be used to help revegetate in the area of the old channel.

##### **4. Vegetation Cover, Quantity and Quality**

Riparian vegetation at the southern end of the new channel will be retained or moved to a functional location along the newly excavated channel. Riparian vegetation from the old channel along US 93 will be used to revegetate the newly constructed channel. Some mortality of this vegetation is expected. However, due to plantings and the increased length of the new channel, the quantity will be greater in the new channel. The new channel will be fenced to keep domestic livestock away from the stream. This will allow for high quality riparian vegetative growth.

##### **5. Aesthetics**

When US93 has been widened, a low swale will remain along the east edge. However, it will not likely support as much riparian vegetation. Camp Creek will be located away from the highway and will provide a pleasing view. The riparian vegetation along the new streamchannel will provide habitat for wildlife and will a safer distance from US93.

##### **7. Unique, Endangered, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resources**

Westslope cutthroat are a Montana species of special concern. This project should provide them with better habitat. The increased stream length should result in more numerous westlope cutthroat within the project area.

##### **9. Historical and Archaeological Sites.**

The proposed activity will be confined to those areas of the streamchannel that have been disturbed by fluvial processes of the stream and/or the process of grazing livestock.

Since the entire area is located on privately owned property, this action does not appear to meet the definition of an "undertaking" as described in the state antiquities act.

The work will require an Army Corps of Engineers "404" permit. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) can require a site survey before the issuance of the "404" permit. This can be required under the Federal

Historic Preservation regulations. Whatever SHPO requires, project sponsors will comply at FWP expense.

**V. Explanation of Impacts to the Human Environment.**

**3. Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenue**

This project may increase the value of the private property where the stream is being relocated, however, it would be difficult to estimate.

**4. Agricultural or Industrial Production**

Grazing production could decrease on the private property, however it would be difficult to estimate how much.

**7. Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities**

The landowners where the stream will be relocated will allow fishing with permission. The original location of the stream along US93 is not heavily fished.

**14. Transportation Networks and Traffic Flows**

The project will relocate the stream away from US93. This would remove a potential hazard to traffic. This will also remove the stream from potential contamination by vehicle accidents.